

A Parable of West and East

Your carbon province ... walks with a cowboy swagger ...
White Stetson ... pancake breakfasts ...
Fistful of Yankee greenbacks ...
Got rich selling oil to the neighbours ...
Throws money to brother and sister provinces ...
That was fine until people started talking about something called ...
 “climate change.”
Your hydro province ... walks stiff ... nose in the air ...
Lives in the east ... well, central Canada ...
Freeze in the dark ...
Ottawa lives in the east ...
Why should I sell your wheat?
Hydro provinces got rich by manufacturing ... and an Ottawa tariff ...
 cost the west dear ...
Not blessed by God with oil and gas to sell ...
Sell hydro? *Bien sûr!*
Act on climate change? Help the east, hurt the west ...
Heard that song before ...
Centre ... Hinterland ...

The carbon and hydro provinces live with their brother and sister provinces and three territorial cousins in a ramshackle old house, built more than 150 years ago. Way up on one of the upper floors lives a parent who goes by the name Ottawa.

When the house was first built, the idea was that Ottawa would be the big boss. Funny thing, though: somehow over the years it just didn't work out that way. One of the provinces kept saying it was going to run away. To keep it home, Ottawa would give it more freedom: but then, of course, all the other provinces wanted the same thing.

Nowadays, Ottawa really can't tell a province to do anything. Friendly persuasion, small bribes and maybe, sometimes (not very often) the threat (which nobody really believes) of taking a province out to the woodhouse for a thrashing (cutting back on allowance) is about all that Ottawa can do.

Ottawa tries, but it just can't get everybody in the house working together. Cleaning the windows or washing the floors? They'll clean the windows in *their* room: but clean the *common* windows in the living room? Good luck.

This old house is a leaky old house: breezes and drafts everywhere, needs a huge amount of energy to keep it hot in the winter and cool in the summer.

Now that everybody is talking about climate change, the neighbours sometimes say the people living in that old house are part of the problem, not the solution.

Makes everybody in that old house feel real bad.

They tell each other: "We gotta do something." But what? What we need is ... We need a plan!

But how can they plan *anything* together?

The provinces will never let Ottawa plan for everyone. And Ottawa? Ottawa doesn't really want to do that. That would make too many people mad at ... guess who?

Sometimes the provinces meet up in one of the musty old rooms of the house, without Ottawa. There, all by themselves, they try to plan. But that never works either: carbon and hydro provinces can never agree.

Sometimes provinces do things by themselves. One put a tax on carbon. One of the carbon provinces surprised everybody by *also* (for a while) putting a tax on carbon. Another carbon province swears it'll *never* put a price on carbon. A hydro province says: "That's it; done our share; not doin' much more." Provinces working alone doesn't solve the problem.

Then other times, Ottawa says to the provinces: “Look, we can all work together and figure this out.” So Ottawa and the provinces (or most of them) come up with a plan ... or, at least, a goal.

Then they all start bragging to the neighbours about their shiny new plan. But you know what?

So full of themselves, never get around to actually doing what has to be done to reach the goal.

So everybody who lives in that big old draughty house ...

The carbon and the hydro provinces, the other provinces and territories, and fussy old Ottawa up on the top floor ... they all keep on talking about the problem ...

They all keep on making a lot of promises to themselves and their neighbours that this time ...

Really ... believe us ... this time ... for sure ... gonna fix this thing.

But somehow ... you know what?

Yes, perhaps you do.

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